(iii) Imposition of stock limit orders in the case of paddy, rice, wheat, edible oils and oilseeds;

(iv) Reducing import duty on Skimmed Milk Powder (SMP) from 15% to 5%.

(v) Using Minimum Export Price (MEP) to regulate exports of onion (averaging at $280 per ton for November 2008) and basmati rice ($1200 PMT);

(vi) Maintaining the Central Issue Price (CIP) for rice (at Rs 5.65 per kg for BPL and Rs 3 per kg for AAY) and wheat (at Rs 4.15 per kg for BPL and Rs 2 per kg for AAY);

(vii) As a measure of abundant precaution, Forward Markets Commission (FMC) has on 23.01.07, directed the three National Exchanges, namely (a) Multi Commodity Exchange of India Ltd., (b) National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Ltd., (c) National Multi Commodity Exchange of India Ltd., to delist all contracts of tur and urad and to close out all outstanding positions in all Tur and Urad contracts at the closing price on 23.01.07. FMC has also stated that no further contract shall be launched without its prior approval and permission already granted to launch contracts in Urad and Tur stands withdrawn.

(viii) Similarly, FMC has on, 27.2.2007, directed all the three National Exchanges that no new futures contracts in wheat and rice shall be launched.

(ix) Reducing petrol and diesel prices by Rs 5 and Rs 2 a litre respectively, effective midnight of 5.12.08.

Implementation of national policy for farmers

*269.PROF. M.S. SWAMINATHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether he placed a National Policy for Farmers on the Table of the House in November, 2007;

(b) if so, the action taken so far to implement this policy; and

(c) what steps have been taken to attract and retain youth in farming being one of the objectives of the Policy?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The National Policy for Farmers, 2007 and the Plan of Action prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture for operationalisation of the Policy have been circulated to Central Ministries and Departments and all the State/Union Territory Governments for taking necessary follow-up action. Many of the provisions contained in the National Policy for Farmers, 2007 are being implemented through a number of on-going schemes and programmes and other initiatives launched by the Government. In pursuance of the decisions of the National Development Council, the Government of India has launched two new Schemes *i.e.*, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana with the objective to increase growth rate of agriculture and allied sectors and to incentives the States to increase public investment in agriculture and allied sectors and National Food Security Mission (NFSM) to improve productivity and production of food grains.

(c) In order to attract and retain youth in agriculture, it is necessary to improve profitability and income of the farmers. Government have taken initiative to substantially increase the Minimum Support Prices of important agricultural crops since 2004-05 in order to ensure remunerative prices to farmers. Government are also implementing a number of schemes for the training, skill development and self-employment of youth in agriculture related activities through Agriculture Technology Management Agency, National Horticulture Mission, Krishi Vigyan Kendras and other schemes implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and other Ministries. Ministry of Agriculture is also implementing the scheme of "Establishment of Agri-clinics and Agri-business Centres by Agricultural Graduates" for promoting self-employment among agricultural graduates and to provide extension and other services to farmers.

Protection of foodgrains from pests

*270.SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that pests eat away foodgrains worth several crores every year;

(b) if so, whether any exact assessment in this regard has been made;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether to protect foodgrains from pests, Government has formulated any strategy to bring in the use of pesticides without hurting environment and human health; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) It is a fact that pest infestation damages foodgrains. Some assessments have been made to estimate the post harvest losses in foodgrains. A Committee appointed by Government of India in 1966 under the Chairmanship of Dr. V.G. Panse had reported 9.33% total post harvest losses, out of which 5.90% losses were caused by pests alone.

In another study conducted by Indian Grain Storage Management and Research Institute (IGMRI), Hapur, U.P. during 1998-99 and 1999-2000, 4.75% post harvest losses had been reported in wheat in major wheat producing States *viz.* Punjab, Haryana, UP, MP and Rajasthan out of which 1.90% losses were due to pests alone.

(d) and (e) With a view to evolve strategies/methodologies to protect foodgrains from pests, the Government had established Indian Grain Storage Management and Research Institute (IGMRI) at Hapur, U.P., which has its field stations at Ludhiana and Hyderabad. IGMRI has developed scientific code of practices including the use of pesticides for safe storage of foodgrains at farm and commercial level. Residue limits of various pesticides in foodgrains have been fixed under Prevention of Food Adulteration Act (PFA) to safeguard the health of consumers.